want to take this opportunity to urge you to schedule consideration of SAFETEA, the Senate version of the reauthorization of the highway and transit programs, at the earliest possible date. This legislation needs to be passed by the Senate and sent to a conference committee as soon as possible. As you know, TEA–21 expired on September 30, 2003 and the current extension expires on May 31, 2005. In order to plan for, maintain, and build our nation's transportation infrastructure, state and local governments need a multi-year reauthorization passed in the very near term.

Thank you for your consideration to this matter.

Respectfully,

RAYMOND C. SCHEPPACH,
Executive Director, National Governors' Association.
WILLIAM T. POUND,
Executive Director, National Conference of State Legislatures.
DANIEL M. SPRAGUE,
Executive Director, Council of State Government.
LARRY E. NAAKE,
Executive Director, National Association of Counties.
J. THOMAS COCHRAN,
Executive Director, U.S. Conference of Mayors.
DONALD J. BORUT,
Executive Director, National League of Cities.
ROBERT O'NEIL,
Executive Director, International City/County Management Association.

NATIONAL GOVERNORS ASSOCIATION,
Washington, DC, April 14, 2005.

Hon. BILL FRIST,
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.
Hon. HARRY REID,
Minority Leader, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR FRIST AND SENATOR REID: On behalf of the nation's governors, we write to urge the Senate to complete action on the surface transportation reauthorization bill and begin conference before the current extension expires on May 31, 2005. Congress' series of successive short-term extensions of TEA–21 have burdened State transportation planning and programming, and can only be addressed by passing a long-term bill.

We encourage the Senate to consider and expeditiously complete its work on S. 732 so that the Senate and House bills may be conferenced and a law enacted.

Additional information and specifics regarding the governors' position on surface transportation reauthorization can be found in the attached NGA Policy which was revised and reaffirmed on March 1, 2005 at the NGA Winter Meeting.

Sincerely.

MARK R. WARNER,
Governor of Virginia.
MIKE HUCKABEE,
Governor of Arkansas.

U.S. SENATE,
Washington, DC, April 14, 2005.

Hon. BILL FRIST,
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate.

DEAR MAJORITY LEADER: We write to request floor consideration of the surface transportation reauthorization bill prior to the completion of this April work period.

As you know, a well-maintained surface transportation system is critical to our nation's economy. Long-term transportation planning is essential to the continued maintenance and improvement of the system. Unfortunately, for the past 18 months, the Federal surface transportation program has operated under a series of short-term extensions denying states the ability to make and to execute long-term transportation plans.

Because of this continuing uncertainty, many states have had to slow or to stop entirely progress on many important transportation projects. Further extensions will only exacerbate these delays costing billions of dollars in project delays and thousands of jobs.

The current program extension expires on May 31, 2005. In order to complete work on this important legislation before this deadline, the full Senate must consider the measure prior to the end of the April work period. Recognizing this urgency, each of the committees of jurisdiction will be ready for Senate floor debate in the near future.

We are ready and committed to moving this process forward in the bipartisan spirit this bill has traditionally enjoyed. We look forward to an open and vigorous debate of the surface transportation reauthorization before the end of this April work period.

Sincerely,

HARRY REID,
MAX BAUCUS,
DANIEL INOUYE,
JIM JEFFORDS,
PAUL SARBANES.

As we all know, the current Federal surface transportation program expired 18 months ago, and the program has operated under a series of short term extensions since then, with the latest set to expire on May 31 of this year. While these extensions have helped the Federal program limp along, they have denied States the ability to make long-term transportation planning decisions essential to the continued maintenance and improvement of the system. In addition, the lack of a permanent reauthorization bill has caused many States to slow or stop entirely progress on many important transportation projects.

According to a report by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, the uncertainty caused by the short term extensions has cost billions of dollars in project delays and thousands of jobs.

Mr. President, I stand ready and committed to moving this process forward in the bipartisan spirit that this bill has always enjoyed. I urge the majority leader to bring the surface transportation reauthorization bill up for floor consideration before the end of the April work period for the good of the country and the workers that so desperately depend upon its future.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, earlier this week I was proud to submit into the RECORD several e-mails from the more than 2,000 I had received from military families around the country. These e-mails detailed the proud service that America's military families make every day. The e-mails are full of their pride and understanding of service. And I know my colleagues join me in expressing our thanks to them for all they do.

I submitted these e-mails because they put a human face on the sacrifices we speak about so often. I have come to learn that one of the stories relayed to me about a Home Depot employee does not reflect Home Depot's policies. In fact, Home Depot is a strong supporter of its mobilized employees. The company was recognized last year by the Department of Defense for its support to service members, including a program to give hiring preferences to injured service members who want to work for the company. Its ''Project Home Front'' contributed tools and volunteers to help military spouses make home repairs while their loved ones were deployed. And, as a model for others to emulate, Home Depot makes up any salary lost by mobilized employees. I am happy to set the record straight on the contributions Home Depot makes to the brave Americans who work for it and serve in the National Guard and Reserves. I regret the unfortunate oversight and thank Home Depot for their support of America's military.

The stories we received are snapshots of what service means to families across this great land. America's military families are partners in the defense of this country and we have to listen to them. Taking care of their needs is not sentimentalism it's a practical investment in our national security. Given the millions spent to recruit and train the men and women of the United States military, our modest investment in military families is a smart way to retain the force.

I thank my colleagues for their continued interest and support on these issues, and I thank Home Depot for its support of America's heroes.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent there now be a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

IBRAHIM PARLAK

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President: I would like to bring my colleagues' attention to a situation facing one of my constituents, Ibrahim Parlak, who, up until a year ago, was living the American dream. After moving to this country in 1991, through hard work and dedication, he worked his way up from being a busboy to owning his own restaurant, Café; Gulistan, in Harbert, MI. Mr. Parlak has spent over a decade of hard, honest work and has led an upstanding life with his family and community. However, now, he may be deported.

Ibrahim Parlak, a Kurd born in southern Turkey, came to the United States seeking asylum in 1991. In his asylum application, Mr. Parlak disclosed that he had been associated with the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) in

the 1980s, that he was involved in an armed skirmish at the Turkish border in 1988, and that he had been imprisoned in Turkey as a result of these facts. In 1992, Mr. Parlak was granted asylum due to the persecution and torture that he suffered at the hands of the Turkish government. The Immigration and Naturalization Service believed that Mr. Parlak had a credible fear of returning to Turkey.

In 1993, Mr. Parlak wanted to take the next step and become a United States citizen. However, when he filled out his application to become a lawful permanent resident, he did not check a box stating that he had been ''arrested, cited, charged, indicted, fined or imprisoned for violating any law or ordinance, excluding traffic violations,'' in or outside of the United States. Mr. Parlak has stated that due to his limited English skills, he misunderstood the form, and believed that the question related only to his activities since he entered the United States. Again, Mr. Parlak had already given the Government the information surrounding his 1988 arrest and conviction in his earlier asylum application. He had also provided documents at the time of his asylum, in Turkish, that described the Turkish government's view of his association with the PKK.

Last July, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) detained Mr. Parlak and DHS is now moving to deport Mr. Parlak, claiming a deliberate misrepresentation of facts. Further, the Department of Homeland Security states that Mr. Parlak has been convicted of an aggravated felony after admission to the United States because, in 2004, the now-disbanded Turkish Security Court reopened his case from 1990 and re-sentenced him for the crime of Kurdish separatism. The ''new'' sentence imposed by the Security Court required less jail time than Mr. Parlak had already served, and the Security Court closed its file on Mr. Parlak. Turkey does not seek his extradition and has, in fact, no interest in his return and will not issue a special passport for that purpose.

Despite his strong ties to his community and the lack of evidence that he is a flight risk, Mr. Parlak continues to be held in prison without bond. The Department of Homeland Security says that Mr. Parlak is a ''terrorist,'' and therefore cannot be released. This ''terrorist'' designation is based solely on Mr. Parlak's association with the PKK in the 1980s. However, not only did Mr. Parlak outline his involvement with the PKK in his asylum application, at the time Mr. Parlak was associated with the PKK, it was not designated as a terrorist organization. The State Department did not add the PKK to its list of terrorist organizations until 1996.

I am concerned with the fact that the government continues to detain and is attempting to deport this model immigrant over activities he disclosed in his application for asylum, an application which, again, was granted. While it may be disputed why the box was not checked accurately, it is incongruous to conclude that he was intentionally hiding those facts from the Department of Justice in 1993, when he detailed them explicitly to the Department of Justice in 1991.

Mr. President, Mr. Parlak is a good man and should be given the chance to remain in the United States and continue the life that he has built for his community, his daughter and himself all these years. Our history is built upon the courage and hard work of immigrants who opposed brutal oppression and fled to our country seeking a new life. Ibrahim Parlak is one of them.

DRU'S LAW

Mr. DORGAN. I rise today to describe S. 792, a bipartisan piece of legislation called ''Dru's Law,'' which I introduced in the Senate yesterday.

This bill seeks to fill some gaping holes in our criminal justice system, made tragically evident by a recent tragedy in North Dakota.

In November 2003, Dru Sjodin, a student at the University of North Dakota, was abducted in the parking lot of a Grand Forks shopping mall. She was found in a ditch in Minnesota some 6 months later.

A suspect was eventually arrested and is awaiting trial. There is abundant evidence that he was responsible for Dru's abduction. The alleged assailant, Alfonso Rodriguez, Jr., had been released from prison only 6 months earlier, having served a 23-year sentence for rape in Minnesota. And what's more, Minnesota authorities had known that he was at high risk of committing another sexual assault if released.

The Minnesota Department of Corrections had rated Rodriguez as a ''type 3'' offender—meaning that he was at the highest risk for reoffending. In an evaluation conducted in January 2003, a prison psychiatrist wrote that Rodriguez had demonstrated ''a willingness to use substantial force, including the use of a weapon, in order to gain compliance from his victims.''

Despite this determination, the Minnesota Department of Corrections released Rodriguez in May 2003, and essentially washed its hands of the case. Since Rodriguez had served the full term of his sentence, the Department of Corrections imposed no further supervision on him at all.

The Minnesota Department of Corrections could have recommended that the State Attorney General seek what is known as a ''civil commitment.'' Under this procedure, a State court would have required Rodriguez to be confined as long as he posed a sufficient threat to the public, even if he had served his original sentence. But the State Attorney General was never notified that Rodriguez was getting out, and there was no chance for the Minnesota courts to consider the case.

So upon his release, Mr. Rodriguez went to live in Crookston, MN, completely unsupervised, a short distance from the Grand Forks shopping mall where Dru Sjodin was abducted.

To make matters worse, while Mr. Rodriguez registered as a sex offender in Minnesota, there was no indication of his release for nearby North Dakota communities. I suspect that most Americans would be surprised to learn that there is currently no national sex offender registry available to the public. So sex offender registries currently stop at State lines. Each State has its own sex offender registry, which tracks only its own residents.

For all intents and purposes, Rodriguez was free to prey on nearby communities in North Dakota, without fear of recognition.

This situation is simply unacceptable. We must do better. A recent study found that 72 percent of ''highest risk'' sexual offenders reoffend within 6 years of being released. And the Bureau of Justice Statistics has determined that sex offenders released from prison are over ten times more likely to be arrested for a sexual crime than individuals who have no record of sexual assault. We cannot just release such individuals with no supervision whatsoever, and let them prey upon an unsuspecting public.

Today, I am reintroducing legislation that will hopefully help to prevent such breakdowns in our criminal justice system, and that will give our citizens the tools to better protect themselves from sexual offenders.

This bill is cosponsored by Senator SPECTER, the new chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee. It also has a growing list of bipartisan cosponsors, which currently includes Senators CONRAD, DAYTON, COLEMAN, LUGAR, JOHNSON, and DURBIN.

The bill does the following three things:

First, it requires the Justice Department to create a national sex offender database accessible to the public through the Internet—with data drawn from the FBI's existing National Sex Offender Registry. This public website would allow users to specify a search radius across State lines, providing much more complete information on nearby sex offenders.

Second, it requires State prisons to notify States attorneys whenever ''high risk'' offenders are about to be released, so that States attorneys can consider petitioning the courts for continued confinement of the offender. The ''civil commitment'' option is available under the law in many States, if an individual is deemed a continuing threat to the public safety. In the Dru Sjodin case, prison officials did not alert the States attorney of Rodriguez' impending release. If they had done so, this tragedy might have been avoided.

Third, it requires states to monitor ''high-risk'' offenders who are released after serving their full sentence—and